

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Projects in Fairfax County, Virginia

October 14, 2009

Hello, everybody. Now before I begin, I just want to thank my outstanding Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood, who's with us today. And I want to thank the folks at Cherry Hill Construction for having me here today. We just took a look at this construction site, and I had a chance to talk to all the outstanding men and women who are working here. Talking with them was a reminder of just how hard they work every single day, just how hard they fight on behalf of their families, and just how hard these times have been for working men and women like them.

Hard-working Americans have borne the brunt of this recession. They've been laid off in historic numbers; they've seen their hours trimmed and their wages cut; they've lived in fear of being the next ones to be let go. And that's not right. Middle class Americans are the ones who built this country. They made it great, and they keep it going each and every day. And they deserve leaders in Washington who are willing to work as hard as they work, who are willing to fight for their futures as hard as they fight for their families.

And we need to all live up to our responsibilities as faithfully as these workers here are living up to theirs. And that's why our goal is not just to rebound from this recession, but to start building an economy that works for all Americans; where everyone who's looking for work can find a job—and not just a temporary job, but a permanent job that lasts from season to season; where our stock market isn't only rising again but our businesses are hiring again. That's our goal.

And I know we have a lot of work to do to meet that goal. But I also know that thanks to the Governor here in Virginia, Tim Kaine, thanks to two outstanding Senators, Mark Warner and Jim Webb, and a great Congressman and—Congressman Jim Moran and as well as Congressman Gerry Connolly, and thanks to the work of Ray here and the rest of my administration, we've made some meaningful progress over the last several months.

Because the fact is, as difficult as these times are—and they're profoundly difficult for a whole lot of people all across the country—we are moving in the right direction. Our economy is in better shape today than it was when I took office, when we were hemorrhaging 700,000 jobs a month and when our financial system was on the brink of collapse and economists from just about every part of the political spectrum were predicting that we might be sinking into a great depression.

And one of the reasons our economy is in better shape today is because we voted to move forward boldly and swiftly to pass a Recovery Act that's being carried out under the outstanding leadership of people like Ray, as well as my Vice President, Joe Biden. It's a Recovery Act that has spurred job creation and economic growth with projects like the one that I'm talking about here today.

Now back in February, Governor Kaine and I came here, and work was just getting underway. And this project, the Fairfax County Parkway project, is designed to be completed—to complete the original version of this parkway by connecting both ends of Fairfax County. The current phase of construction will create new private sector jobs, and that

won't just make a difference to all the people who get these jobs, it will make a difference to all those communities where they spend their paychecks. Businesses of all size will be fueled by their paychecks—in Fairfax County, in Virginia, and beyond.

Now, this project is the largest of its kind in the State. But it's just 1 of more than 60 that are being planned all across Virginia. And it's 1 of 8,000 highway projects that have been approved under the Recovery Act across this country, nearly 5,000 of which are already under construction. To put this another way, roughly three-quarters of Recovery Act highway funding is already being invested as part of the largest investment in the Nation's infrastructure since President Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System back in the 1950s.

And because so many of these projects are being managed so well—and I want to thank the team that's been working so hard out here—these projects are coming in, on average, 10 to 20 percent under budget. That's unheard of—10 to 20 percent under budget. And that means we can do more. We can create more jobs and launch more projects with every taxpayer dollar.

It's important to note that the jobs we'll create are not Government jobs, but private sector jobs. Cherry Hill Construction was able to put people to work because of its—this project, just as other private contractors are doing because of similar projects across the country. And ultimately, that's the engine of our economy: businesses, large and small, getting back on their feet. And that's the focus of our efforts.

But what makes these kinds of projects so important isn't just that we're creating so many jobs, it's that we're putting Americans to work doing the work that America needs done. We're rebuilding our crumbling roads, our bridges, our waterways. We've already approved nearly a thousand transportation projects to upgrade airports and railroads and mass transit systems and shipyards. We're strengthening our Nation's infrastructure in ways that will leave lasting benefits to our communities, making them stronger, making them safer, and making them better places to live.

Now, this is just one part of what we're doing through the Recovery Act to create jobs and spur economic growth. We've also provided the middle class—95 percent of working families—a tax cut, including 3 million families here in Virginia. We've increased and extended unemployment insurance for 12 million Americans to help them weather this economic storm, and that's benefited over 220,000 Virginians. We've made COBRA 65 percent cheaper, so if people are looking for work, they still have health coverage. We've offered emergency relief to more than 1 million seniors, veterans, and other Virginians who need it most.

We've provided assistance to States like Virginia to help prevent police officers and teachers and firefighters from being laid off. And we've supported over \$250 million in lending in Virginia—and 30,000 loans to small businesses across America—that have helped to create or save thousands of jobs. And every American can track how their dollars are being spent by going to Recovery.gov, because I'm committed to upholding the highest standards of transparency and accountability for how we spend taxpayer money.

So here's the bottom line: We're moving forward on a number of economic fronts, and we're going to continue to explore each and every avenue that I can think of that will lead to job creation and economic growth. But it all starts with projects like this. Because if we can put Americans to work rebuilding the Fairfax County Parkway, we can help get the economy moving again in Fairfax County. And if we get the economy moving in Fairfax County, we get it moving across Virginia. And if we get it moving across Virginia, we're getting it moving all

across America. That's what we committed ourselves to doing when I took office; we are moving forward.

I'm grateful to the outstanding work of the people who are standing behind me, as well as the—all the contractors and private businesses that are involved. And we are going to keep on going until we make sure that every single American in this country who's looking for work is going to be able to get the kind of well-paying job that supports their families.

Thanks very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:34 p.m. at the Fairfax County Parkway extension.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : American Recovery and Reinvestment Act projects in Fairfax County, Virginia.

Locations: Fairfax County, VA.

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